

OFFSHORE ISLANDS AND TAIWAN

PUBLIC OPINION AND DECISION MAKING

PUBLIC OPPOSITION

During September public opposition to American involvement in the defense of the Offshore Islands continued to mount in the United States and abroad. American officials were well aware of this opposition and continued to be constrained by it. A sampling of reactions is presented below.

On September 7 Prime Minister Nehru of India said that Quemoy and Matsu must sooner or later be surrendered to the Chinese Communists and declared that he sought a peaceful solution to the problem.¹ On September 3 Philippine Ambassador to the United States General Carlos Romulo stated that the Philippines would welcome a third party move through the UN to seek a solution to the crisis.² While the opposition of the British Government was expressed in private, the Labour Party and the British press expressed disapproval of American actions. British public opinion was opposed to war over Quemoy, and London diplomats feared that U.S. involvement would lead to "a Suez reverse."³

On September 10 Australian Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies declared that the Australian Government had

no commitment to help defend Quemoy and Matsu. He did not think that the ANZUS Pact of 1951 covered military operations in the Taiwan region.⁴ On the next day, there was a further indication of lack of support for the U.S.

position even among its allies when Prime Minister Walter Nash of New Zealand suggested that Taiwan be made an independent and neutralized nation.⁵

On September 12 in response to an Eisenhower speech on the Offshore Island situation which will be discussed below,* a number of foreign reactions were reported in The New York Times. Macmillan stated that the United States had neither sought nor received any promise of British military support in the Taiwan Straits. He noted, however, that Britain was obliged to help find a peaceful solution to the Far Eastern crisis by private consultation and public diplomatic action. The French were reported to welcome negotiations but were pessimistic about the possibility of their success. Bonn was silent on the Eisenhower speech, reflecting a deliberate policy of non-involvement.⁶ Japanese Foreign Minister Aichihiro Fujiyama expressed agreement with the U.S. position that the Chinese Communist

use of force caused tensions in the Far East, which should be abated peacefully. A joint U.S.-Japanese statement indicated that no promises or commitments had been made by either country.⁷

On the 17th, resentment of Dulles' policy among West Berliners was reported in the New York Post. According to one of their columnists, Berliners were saying that the U.S. action had strained the Atlantic Alliance and emphasized that they would not support the United States in a conflict with Communist China over Quemoy. West Berliners were also said to have been disturbed by Dulles suggesting an analogy between Quemoy and Berlin. They felt that losing Berlin was of much greater importance and that the West should be prepared to go into World War III to hold Berlin but should not be and would not be to hold Quemoy.⁸

On September 17 the Japanese Government stated that it could not prevent the United States from using its base in Japan to supply troops on Taiwan. It made this statement in commenting on a Soviet note protesting American use of its bases in Japan and indicated that therefore it was helpless to prevent this measure of support to the U.S. military effort.⁹

On September 29 the British Labour Party at its annual conference voted to oppose British support of the United States in the event of a war over Quemoy.¹⁰

One of the few American allies to support vigorously the U.S. action in Taiwan throughout the crisis was the government of Syngman Rhee in South Korea. On September 13 in reaction to Eisenhower's speech, Rhee hailed the talk as a step toward freedom.¹¹ Support for the U.S. position came on September 18 when the military leaders

of SEATO were reported to have agreed unanimously to strengthen the defense of the treaty area in light of the Taiwan Straits crisis,¹² and on September 20 when a South Korean envoy to Taiwan vowed complete aid to "Free China."¹³

Public opposition in the United States to the Administration's apparent determination to defend the Offshore Islands was also heavy. On September 18, for example, Walter Lippman argued in a column that the United States should defend Taiwan but not the Offshore Islands.¹⁴ The same view was expressed editorially by The New York Times on the following day.¹⁵

Congressional criticism, particularly from Democratic Senators, increased in volume. It was reported in the press that congressional opposition was heavy and strongly

opposed to Administration policy.¹⁶ Much of the criticism came from members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and from other congressional leaders.*

On September 27 The New York Times reported in a story whose validity was never challenged that eighty percent of the mail to the State Department was critical of the Administration's policy.¹⁹ Vice President Richard Nixon immediately accused an unnamed State Department official of seeking to sabotage American policy by revealing the unfavorable mail response.²⁰ On September 29, Senator John

F. Kennedy declared that the United States must find a way to disentangle itself from defense of the Offshore Islands while continuing to defend Taiwan.²¹ The increasing Democratic attack on Administration policy caused fear that the Communists would interpret the debate as an indication that the United States would not act. Speaking for the

*The Administration nevertheless continued its efforts to secure bipartisan support for its policy. On September 25 the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations sent a long letter and memorandum to twenty-four congressional leaders attempting to explain the American position.¹⁷

On the 26th, George C. Denny, a staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, met with Rear Admiral W. S. Post, Jr., Regional Director of the Far East Division in ISA, to discuss current American policy. While Post sought to justify and defend U.S. policy, Denny informed him that there was only lukewarm support for the policy among Republican members of the Committee. He suggested that the Administration should not act against Communist China.¹⁸

Democratic Advisory Committee on October 2, Paul Nitze warned that the current debate should not be taken as a sign of disunity or unwillingness on the part of the United States to defend its interests.²²

On September 29, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Senator Theodore Green sent a letter to President Eisenhower expressing his concern about American policy. Though Green did not release the text of his letter until Eisenhower had publicly replied, the press learned immediately of the letter and its general content. Green wrote to express his concern that events "may result in military involvement at the wrong time, in the wrong place, and on issues not of vital concern to our security." The letter continued with Green's assessment that the United States would be fighting without the support of America's allies or of the American people.²³

THE PUBLIC AMERICAN POSITION

Throughout September and early October, Administration officials, basing themselves on the Newport statement, sought in their public statements not only to deter further Chinese Communist military moves but also to answer the criticisms of the policy of the kind discussed above.

On September 7 Eisenhower reaffirmed the U.S. intention to keep Southeast Asia free, and Dulles warned that Communist China had not renounced "the use of force to serve their expansionist aims." He said he did not think that the U.S. vessels sailing inside the twelve mile limit of the China coast would lead to war.²⁴

On September 9 Dulles held a press conference in which he hinted at a fresh approach to negotiations with the Chinese Communists. Dulles stated that the United States might make a new try at Warsaw to obtain from the Chinese Communists an agreement to renounce force in the Taiwan Straits. American efforts, he continued, would be constructive in a situation which might have further consequences and which involved "rights and interests of an ally." He said that the United States could not negotiate the future of the Offshore Islands because they were the property of the Government of the Republic of China. If U.S. ships were hit off Quemoy, the United States would reply in a military way.

During the course of the conference, Dulles acknowledged that he was the "high official" who had been cited as giving the background briefing following the Newport statement.

The Secretary of State indicated that the United States had decided to convoy only to within three miles of Quemoy partly because activities within the three-mile radius might require a decision, or imply that one had been made by the President under the Formosa Resolution to defend Quemoy. He indicated that the decision was also based on the fact that American ships operating beyond the three-mile limit would not risk coming under the fire of the Communist shore batteries. Pressed by reporters to indicate why the American position was remaining ambiguous despite his often stated belief that the most frequent cause of war was miscalculation, Dulles replied that under the terms of the Formosa Resolution and the defense treaty, the President did not have the legal right to assert flatly that the United States would defend Quemoy under all conditions. He concluded by expressing his belief that one could "guess" from the Newport statement whether the United States would defend Quemoy and that he did not want to go beyond that statement.²⁵

Secretary of the Army Brucker on September 10 said that he was convinced the GRC forces were strong enough to withstand a Chinese Communist attack on Quemoy, but, he continued, if the Chinese Communists ignored U.S.

warnings, we were "prepared to show the world what [we] can do."²⁶

On September 11 Eisenhower returned from his vacation at Newport and consulted with Dulles, Haggerty, Goodpaster and Robert Montgomery on a major address on U.S. policy which had been drafted by Dulles.²⁷ In this speech Eisenhower declared that the United States would welcome negotiations which would lead to a settlement acceptable to all parties including the GRC. He noted that the Chinese Communists had said that they were planning to capture Quemoy and had subjected it to a heavy bombardment. He went on to explain why Quemoy could not be allowed to fall:

Let us suppose that the Chinese Communists conquer Quemoy. Would that be the end of the story? We know that it would not be the end of the story. History teaches that, when powerful despots can gain something through aggression, they try, by the same methods, to gain more and more and more.

Also we have more to guide us than the teachings of history. We have the statements, the boastings, of the Chinese Communists themselves. They frankly say that their present military effort is part of a program to conquer Formosa.

It is as certain as can be that the shooting which the Chinese Communists started on August 23d had as its purpose not just the taking of the island of Quemoy. It is part of what is indeed an ambitious plan of armed conquest.

This plan would liquidate all the free-world positions in the Western Pacific area and

bring them under captive governments which would be hostile to the United States and the free world. Thus the Chinese and Russian Communists would come to dominate at least the western half of the now friendly Pacific Ocean.

So aggression by ruthless despots again imposes a clear danger to the United States and to the free world.

.....
I must say to you very frankly and soberly, my friends, the United States cannot accept the result that the Communists seek. Neither can we show, now, a weakness of purpose--a timidity--which would surely lead them to move more aggressively against us and our friends in the Western Pacific area.

.....
Today, the Chinese Communists announce, repeatedly and officially, that their military operations against Quemoy are preliminary to attack on Formosa. So it is clear that the Formosa Straits resolution of 1955 applies to the present situation.

If the present bombardment and harassment of Quemoy should be converted into a major assault, with which the local defenders could not cope, then we would be compelled to face precisely the situation that Congress visualized in 1955.

Thus Eisenhower made it clear that the United States would defend Quemoy. He went on to explain why an explicit commitment had not been made:

I have repeatedly sought to make clear our position in this matter so that there would not be danger of Communist miscalculation. The Secretary of State on September 4th made a statement to the same end. This statement would not, of course, cover every contingency. Indeed, I interpret the joint resolution as requiring me not to make absolute advance commitment. It is to use my judgment according to the circumstances of the time.

But the statement did carry a clear meaning to the Chinese Communists and to the Soviet Union. There will be no retreat in the face of armed aggression, which is part and parcel of a continuing program of using armed force to conquer new regions.²⁸

The President's speech concluded with the hope that negotiations would bring the crisis to an end.*

On September 12, Secretary of Defense McElroy at a press conference further amplified U.S. policy. McElroy declared that the Chinese Communist blockade of Quemoy would be broken but did not state how. He stated that the United States had considered bombing the mainland to knock out shore batteries which were harassing Quemoy but had come to the belief that it could supply Quemoy without this. The United States would resist a Chinese Communist assault

* James Reston in an article in the New York Times in commenting on the Eisenhower speech interpreted it as saying that the U.S. would fight if it was necessary to prevent the conquest of Quemoy and Matsu by the Chinese Communists. He noted that the speech had made no reference to the latest reports that the United States would suggest to the Chinese Communists that if they renounced the use of force, we would tell the GRC to leave Quemoy and Matsu and end its operations on ships and planes in the Chinese Communist ports of Amoy and Hainan. Neither did he make any mention of U.S. convoying ships or planes flying over Chinese Communist territory. In addition, Eisenhower, according to Reston, had ignored the protests of U.S. allies and Democrats. He interpreted Eisenhower's sticking to the original American position to mean that the U.S. would not fight for Quemoy and Matsu in the first stages, but would if it were necessary--if the GRC were losing.²⁹

on Quemoy without waiting for the GRC first to try to defend it alone. Quemoy, he said, was regarded as a major part of the Taiwan defense system and that since the Chinese Communists had said that taking Quemoy and Matsu was part of an attack on Taiwan, an attack on Quemoy and Matsu would be regarded as giving the President authority, under Congressional Resolutions, to take whatever steps he considered advisable.³⁰

On September 12 Eisenhower replied publicly to Khrushchev's letter of September 8.* He declared that the Chinese Communists were seeking to capture Taiwan and the Offshore Islands and suggested that the Soviet Union urge the Chinese Communists to seek a peaceful solution. Eisenhower again expressed the willingness of the United States to negotiate.³¹

As another part of the effort to impress upon the Chinese Communists U.S. military strength and determination, Admiral Felt arrived on Taiwan to confer with Chiang Kai-shek and his own subordinates in the newly established Taiwan Defense Command. He expressed confidence in U.S. destructive capability.³² On the 15th, the Department of Defense announced in Washington that it had assigned an anti-aircraft

*See pp. 311-316.

battalion equipped with Nike Hercules missiles, using both conventional and atomic warheads, to the "Pacific area."³³

On September 18, Dulles made a speech at the UN in which he expressed the hope that negotiations would lead to a cease-fire. The prominence given to the Taiwan situation had grown in importance as the speech, originally drafted in the International Organization section in State on September 10, was circulated within the Department and worked over by Dulles.³⁴ In his speech Dulles declared that while the situation was complicated, there were two "undisputed and decisive" facts:

1. The Chinese Communist regime has never during its 9 years of existence exercised any authority over Taiwan, the Penghus, or the Quemoy or Matsu Islands.

2. The Chinese Communist regime is now attempting to extend its authority to these areas by the use of naked force.³⁵

The Secretary of State told the General Assembly that force should not be used to settle disputes and concluded with the hope that a peaceful settlement could be negotiated.³⁶

After his speech Dulles consulted again with Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold and with French Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville.³⁷

At a background press conference in New York on September 17, Dulles described the situation as extremely

serious and refused to rule out demilitarization as a solution. He told reporters that he believed that the GRC had the right under the self-defense clause in the exchange of letters between Dulles and Yeh in 1955 to take action against the shore batteries if the blockade continued. He added:

Now that does not mean that I favor that action but I think the reasons against the action, perhaps, are more of a practical character than legal. But I do think that it is not unfair for the Chinese Nationalists to interpret the letter as giving them the right to act in defense of Quemoy and Matsu if otherwise they appear to be blockaded out of existence.³⁸

On the 19th in a public statement in New York, Dulles again described the situation as "extremely serious." He expressed the hope that the Warsaw talks would bring positive results, but he observed that Gromyko at the UN had made no reference to the talks. He stated that he is not aware of any concrete diplomatic intervention by other governments.³⁹

On the same day in Washington, a Defense Department spokesman said that U.S. pilots had the right of hot pursuit into China but were not authorized to bomb the mainland.⁴⁰

On September 20, the State Department announced that the United States had rejected the letter from Khrushchev

message to Eisenhower quoted above.^{41*}

The White House later issued two statements from Newport explaining that the note had been rejected because it was "couched in language that it abusive and intemperate" and contained "inadmissable threats."⁴³

On September 30 Dulles, in a press conference, made a number of statements reflecting the Administration's belief that the blockade had been broken. Dulles believed that it was now time to seek a diplomatic settlement of the immediate issues.^{**} He now believed that the crisis was over in the sense that the Chinese Communist attempt to change the situation by military force had been defeated and that therefore the problem was to satisfy the "legitimate" demands of the Chinese Communists in relation to provocative action by the Nationalists from the Offshore Islands, and to try to stabilize the situation. Though they were widely interpreted as expressing a change in Dulles' position, the Secretary's answers rather reflected a change in his view as to what stage the crisis was in. With the military phase over, Dulles was prepared to make what he felt to be

*The rejection was decided on and the note drafted at a State Department meeting attended by Dulles, Herter, Robertson, Reinhardt, Murphy, Parsons and Marshall Green.⁴² No information on the substance of the meeting is available.

** See pp. 326-328.

legitimate political concessions, but at any time when the military situation heated up, he would go back to his opposition to any concessions.

In response to questions from reporters, the Secretary of State stated that the United States would be in favor of a reduction in the size of the Quemoy garrison after the establishment of a de facto cease fire in the Taiwan Straits. He proposed a mutual renunciation of force in the Taiwan Straits and indicated that he thought it was "foolish" to keep so many forces on the Island. Dulles denied that the United States was going beyond the Formosa Resolution and stated that:

I would say today, if the United States believed that these islands could be abandoned without its having any adverse impact upon the potential defense of Formosa and the treaty area, we would not be thinking of using forces there. It's because there is that relationship, under present conditions, conditions primarily of the Communists' making, that there is the tie there.⁴⁴

He expressed doubts as to the likelihood of a return to the mainland except the wake of a Hungarian-type revolution and stressed that the United States had no

commitment to help Chiang return to the mainland.^{45*}

American optimism was reflected by Admiral Felt, who told a press conference that resupply was now at an adequate level. He reported that U.S. forces had no limits put on their actions in international waters. On the touchy question of resupply or defense of the smaller islands, Felt asserted that "when we speak of the Quemoy's we normally speak in terms of big and little. The Tans are just little tiny islands."⁴⁷

On October 1, Eisenhower at a press conference indicated that as a military man he did not think that it was a good idea for the Nationalists to station so many troops

*The Dulles press conference was interpreted in Taiwan as well as in the United States as a major change in U.S. policy. In an effort to remove this interpretation, Dulles on October 1 sent a telegram to Drumright in which he stated that there had been no conscious change in his position expressed in his press conference of September 30. He declared that the United States has continually asserted that it would not accept change by force, but if there were a ceasefire it would explore the possibility of preventing the Offshore Islands from becoming a source of irritation. He noted that a majority of correspondents in Washington opposed U.S. policy and therefore played up this statement as indicating a change in the U.S. position. He declared that we must remove the feeling that the United States has put its destiny in the hands of Chiang, a feeling shared by much of the press and many members of Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, and most of all by allies who believe Chiang wants war. He concluded by declaring "I do not go one inch further in this matter than seems to be necessary in order to prevent whole Chinese policy from being swept overboard."⁴⁶

"Overboard"

on Quemoy, but he stressed that the basic issue "is to avoid retreat in the face of force, not to resort to force to resolve these questions in the international world. And we believe if we are not faithful to that principle, in the long run we are going to suffer."⁴⁸

In response to a critical letter from Senator Green,^{*} Eisenhower in a reply, which was dated October 2 and made public October 4, strongly defended U.S. policy while stressing his desire for peace. The letter, which accurately reflected Eisenhower's thinking, stated that the United States would observe the Congressional Resolution on Formosa but implied that the terms of the Resolution would require him to defend the Outer Islands if this were necessary for the defense of Taiwan. He went on to say what might happen:

The Chinese and Soviet Communist leaders assert, and have reason to believe, that if they can take Quemoy and Matsu by armed assault that will open the way for them to take Formosa and the Pescadores and as they put it, "expel" the United States from the West Pacific and cause its fleet to leave international waters and "go home."

I cannot dismiss these boastings as mere bluff. Certainly there is always the possibility that it may in certain contingencies, after taking account of all relevant facts, become necessary or appropriate for the defense of Formosa and the

^{*} See above, p.

Pescadores also to take measures to secure and protect the related positions of Quemoy and Matsu.

The President stated that if military action were necessary, "our friends and allies would support the United States" and in fact would be "appalled" if the United States retreated in the face of military pressure. He expressed the hope finally that the American people would be united if war came. 49

DECISION MAKING IN WASHINGTON

When word reached American officials on September 7 that the first U.S. escorted resupply operation had been successful and had been carried out without Chinese Communist opposition, there was some hope that the crisis was at an end. The Chinese Communists' failure to fire on the September 7th convoy is interpreted as being a sign that the Chinese Communists might not be prepared to interfere with a U.S.-supported GRC resupply operation.

Dulles accepted a proposal made by Green that leaflet drops and other overflights be suspended during the Chinese cease fire. This was indicated in a phone conversation with Green. His tentative approval of Green's suggestion that U.S. convoying be halted but indicated that he was inclined to accept JCS advice on this. Dulles asked Green to consult

with Twining or with Burke on the convoy question and to urge on them the need to avoid provocative action.⁵⁰

After consultation with Green, Burke dispatched a message to U.S. forces in the Pacific. The Chief of Naval Operations informed his commanders in the field that, since the Chinese Communists were not then firing against the Offshore Islands, and did not try to interfere with the convoys, it was important to avoid any action which was provocative or might appear to be provocative. He warned that small incidents might have great impact on the negotiations about to be undertaken between the United States and the Chinese Communists in Warsaw. He directed that as long as the Chinese Communists withheld their fire on the Offshore Islands, only one U.S. destroyer could be in sight of the off-loading of the beaches of Quemoy. He suggested that one ship control the situation and call for additional U.S. and GRC support if it were needed as well as "make sure GRC Navy takes proper action." Other U.S. support should remain over the horizon and U.S. aircraft should remain over Taiwan.⁵¹ In addition, attack carrier aircraft day-and-night sweep of the Taiwan Straits were halted.⁵²

A State Department telegram informed Drumright of the being sent to the CNO and asked him to cooperate

in seeing that it was implemented without affecting the build-up on Quemoy. He was also asked to encourage the GRC to avoid provocative action.⁵³

In his phone conversation with Green, Dulles indicated for the first time interest in the possibility of an agreement aiming at the demilitarization of the Offshore Islands. He stated that he realized it would be hard but he hoped it could be worked out and succeed in getting GRC forces back to Taiwan. He indicated that he agreed with Green that the Chinese Communists might be planning further military moves. He asked Green to prepare instructions for Beam asking him to consider demilitarization.⁵⁴

Following this conversation on the morning of the 7th, Green prepared the memorandum requested by Dulles analyzing the possibility for demilitarization of the Offshore Islands. He listed the following arguments in favor:

- (a) To remove a powder keg.
- (b) Withdrawal to defensible terrain.
- (c) Responsive to U.S. and world opinion.
- (d) World opinion demands action. We have come dangerously close to atomic war.

The disadvantages as seen saw them were

- (a) The GRC was bitterly opposed and might refuse.

- (b) A bitter U.S.-GRC controversy at this point would be very dangerous.
- (c) The Chinese Communists might agree but later take the Offshore Islands and the U.S. could do nothing at this point without using nuclear weapons.
- (d) Demilitarization of the Offshore Islands would heighten acceptance of the two-China concept.
- (e) A U.S. proposal for demilitarization would be tacit acceptance that the threat to peace came from the GRC. In order to counteract this the U.S. should simultaneously demand demilitarization of the shore opposite the GRC-held Offshore Islands.
- (f) The proposal would represent a partial surrender to Communist China and therefore would whet their appetite for further gains.

The Green memorandum concluded:

- (1) There is a need to take some steps since we came close to war and there still may be war. "The crisis is far from over."
- (2) Demilitarization is inadvisable.

- (3) The first step should be to get both the GRC and the Chinese Communists to avoid provocative actions.
- (4) The U.S. should approach demilitarization very slowly.
- (5) The U.S. should use the Warsaw talks to identify actions which the Chinese Communists consider provocative.
- (6) It is necessary to maintain close coordination with Taipei.⁵⁵

Green discussed the demilitarized proposal with Burke when he spoke to him later in the day and told him that Dulles wanted the possibility of demilitarizing the Offshore Islands explored. Burke asked his staff to take a quick look at the problem and prepared a memorandum for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. In the memorandum he noted that State was now considering a proposal to demilitarize the Offshore Islands. It seemed to the Navy in its initial look that this was not a good idea. The GRC would react violently. The Communists might accept and later seize the Offshore Islands by "peaceful means" and then the United States would have no recourse but "to blast the hell out of China," and could not do that because of public opinion.

It looked to Burke like an attempt to sweep the problem under the rug.⁵⁶

On the following day, in a follow-up memorandum, Burke noted that in connection with the proposed negotiations in Warsaw, the State Department had suggested the demilitarization of the Offshore Islands be considered. Burke recommended that U.S. forces remain deployed in the Pacific and that the United States insist on an immediate halt of Chinese Communist aggression. He felt that the United States should accept a ceasefire if the proposal came from the Chinese Communists. The United States should agree to demilitarization only if it included the coastal areas plus Chinese Communist islands near Quemoy and Matsu. In addition he felt the United States should demand an inspection system and a guarantee of the territorial integrity of the Offshore Islands underwritten by SEATO or a larger coalition and accompanied by a renunciation of force by the Chinese Communists.⁵⁷

A group of State Department officials met with Secretary of State Dulles on the morning of September 8 and explored the possibility of demilitarizing the Offshore Islands. Though Dulles was to continue to express interest in demilitarization, the others present--Robertson, Parsons,

Green and Deputy Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs, L.R. Lutkins--expressed opposition. Dulles indicated his surprise that the Chinese Communists had not pressed for talks at a higher level. He asserted that he recognized that the Offshore Islands were not used for operations against the mainland but wanted more detailed information.* However small, the "provocative" action from the Islands could not be justified by international law, Dulles said, and the United States should not expect the Chinese Communists to refrain from attacking the Offshore Islands as long as they were used at all as a base for hostile actions. After making these observations, Dulles raised the possibility of demilitarization. Robertson responded that demilitarization was not a practical solution since the Communists could seize the Islands at any time after they were demilitarized. He suggested that the United States might ask the GRC to refrain from any provocative actions from the Offshore Islands.

* On September 11 a detailed statement of Chinese Nationalist actions from the Offshore Islands was sent to Dulles. This memorandum contained the information presented in Chapter I on Nationalist operations from the Islands (see Table 4, pp. 10-12).

Dulles responded that the Chinese Communists would undoubtedly reject demilitarization in return for de facto recognition of GRC control of the Islands and this might be a good reason to make the proposal. He stressed the importance of giving very careful consideration to the American public posture. On the other hand Dulles reaffirmed that the United States should not give an inch on the basic principle of resisting the use of force to pursue territorial ambitions. He declared that the Chinese Communists must not be permitted to use force to gain territory which they had never had under their control. The Communist line that the Offshore Islands were a thorn in their side was nonetheless described by Dulles as having great appeal and for that reason the United States at Warsaw and in its public statements could not ask the Communists simply to renounce the use of force.

Perhaps in an effort to head off the demilitarization proposal to which he objected, Green suggested that the United States might begin the Warsaw talks with the suggestion that the two sides examine means of avoiding provocative action. Dulles indicated that he had been thinking along the same lines and specifically that Beam might ask Wang what actions by the Nationalists the Communists

considered provocative. Robertson responded and expressed the skepticism felt by all of those present except Dulles by asserting that the Communists would reply (as in fact they did) that the provocation was U.S. occupation of Taiwan. Robertson also strongly urged the importance of consulting the GRC before making any moves at Warsaw.⁵⁹

On September 8 the Chinese Communist fire against the second U.S.-escorted convoy brought an end to the hope that the crisis was over. During the ensuing weeks officials in Washington were to continue to explore various diplomatic solutions.* At the same time they sought privately,

* It was at this period that press reports began to most accurately reflect the feelings of the Government at the military level, although there continued to be no hints of Dulles' own efforts to find a peaceful way out of the crisis and the fact that he constantly needed to be pressed by his staff to maintain his tough position. Joseph Alsop, for example, in a column in the New York Herald Tribune on September 10, was able to report that highest Pentagon authorities maintained that the United States would be almost compelled to use tactical nuclear weapons in any fight beyond a mild spat. He reported that U.S. ground and air forces in the Pacific were weaker, except in terms of nuclear weapons, than before Korea. He reported that the planes in the field had been designed and equipped almost exclusively with nuclear weapons in mind and that the B-47 medium bombers of SAC could not deliver anything but atomic weapons. Alsop wrote that Eisenhower had authorized the Joint Chiefs to plan to fight only nuclear wars and he stated that the United States would try to keep the war limited but that it would be up to the Chinese Communist leader not the Pentagon to keep the war limited.⁶⁰

Marguerite Higgins in the same paper the following reported that official sources had laid out premature

as well as publicly, to develop support in the United States and abroad for the American position. Despite disagreements on what to do if the current policy failed, Washington officials were all convinced of the importance of avoiding a war with Communist China and of preventing the Chinese Nationalists from provoking the Communists. They were also convinced that the Nationalists would provoke the Communists, if they could find a way to do so which they were sure would involve the United States in the military operation. At the same time that they sought to prevent the Chinese Nationalists from making any rash move, American officials tried desperately to get precise information on the resupply situation. The question of whether or not the blockade could be broken under current conditions was to become very important. Washington was desperately starved for accurate and up-to-date information on what convoys had gone out, how many supplies had landed, why the convoys had failed to land supplies, and why there were to be

the report circulating in Washington that the Navy was preparing an amphibious landing to put GRC troops and supplies on Quemoy within twenty-four hours, but she reported that U.S. forces in the Far East were prepared for such a move and that the order for U.S. ships to sail to Quemoy beaches could come at any time. More accurately she reported that the modern Seventh Fleet warships could not move in the ~~immediately~~ immediately surrounding Quemoy.⁶¹

continued failures to make a massive breakthrough against the artillery fire when prior to the crisis it had been the considered opinion of the American Government that artillery fire alone could not impose a blockade on Quemoy.

In an effort to secure these objectives, two coordinated State-JCS messages were sent out to the Taiwan Defense Command and the U.S. Ambassador on September 8. The military message underlined the fact that the GRC was expected not to provoke incidents or to present the United States with a fait accompli.⁶² The State Department message to Drumright stressed that the GRC must not appear the aggressor. The message cautioned that world opinion was shaped by who appeared to be the aggressor and that therefore the United States and the GRC must act with firmness and resolve but also with calmness and restraint. It emphasized the need for close U.S.-GRC coordination in and in advance of all operations. It noted that there might be temptation on the part of the GRC to provoke incidents which could involve U.S. hostilities but that the United States expected full advance coordination as the right of an ally who would bear the major brunt if war were provoked.⁶³

On September 9 the importance of the Offshore Islands to the GRC had been underlined in a State Department

Intelligence Report which had declared that the loss of the Offshore Islands would affect the GRC assessment of the likelihood of its attaining its fundamental objective of returning to the mainland. The report noted that the severity of the shock to the GRC would depend on the extent of continuing U.S. support, the magnitude of military losses and the changes in attitudes of other countries, but it concluded that it would not lead to the collapse of the GRC. The estimate pointed out that the Offshore Islands, in the eyes of the GRC, was a test of U.S. support of the GRC as the sole legitimate government of China. The report concluded by indicating that the magnitude of the effect of a loss of the Islands would only be slightly affected by whether the Islands fell to a military attack or by a U.S.-forced withdrawal, but that in no case would the GRC launch an attack against the mainland.⁶⁴

In an effort to secure support for its policy in the Taiwan Straits among NATO allies, the United States provided the American Ambassador to the NATO Council with periodic briefings attempting to explain and justify U.S. policy and to secure support for the U.S. position. The briefing paper which was sent to the U.S. representative on September 9 emphasized Chinese Communist naval strength

in the area and declared that "successful assault without concurrent air strikes will depend on the length and effectiveness of preceding bombardment and interdiction operations. . . . If CHICOM continues to press attack, defenders would eventually be over-run in absence of assistance from the U.S."⁶⁵ The U.S. representative stressed that the United States had exercised deliberate restraint in the Taiwan Straits and stressed the conclusion that the Communists had the ability to take the Islands against only a Nationalist defense, therefore pointing up the need for U.S. intervention should the Communists try to seize the Offshore Islands.⁶⁶

On September 11 both the Joint Chiefs and the Chief of Naval Operations sent messages to the Taiwan Defense Commander on the question of whether or not the GRC was making a maximum effort. The JCS message commented on the tendency of GRC craft to retreat as soon as fired upon without waiting over the horizon a while and trying again:

There is a possibility that GRC is being deliberately inept in order to draw U.S. inextricably into conflict with CHICOMS. Consequently, we must be certain that Kinmen [Quemoy] would fall despite all GRC can and should do before we consider taking direct action against CHICOM forces or installations except in self defense. The GRC cannot expect U.S. aid until they have demonstrated that they have determined to see action through to the finish despite hazards. It

is important that the next resupply be well planned and succeed.⁶⁷

The message from the Chief of Naval Operations reported that there was much concern within State, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the JCS over the failure to resupply Quemoy. It stated that the U.S. must be able to make a showing either that the GRC could accomplish resupply or that difficulties would be insurmountable and reported that the issue would come before the Joint Chiefs for further decision on September 15.⁶⁸

A luncheon meeting of Defense Department officials including McElroy, Sprague, Twining and the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Plans and Policy, Admiral Robert L. Dennison, representing Admiral Burke was held on September 12. At the lunch McElroy expressed the feeling that the GRC was not doing all that it could to resupply Quemoy.

The lunch was followed by a meeting at 2 p.m. when those listed above were joined by Dulles and Robertson from the State Department.⁶⁹ Twining reported that he had received a message from COMCOPAC outlining alternatives if the GRC proved incapable of supplying Quemoy. These included authorizing Chinese Air Force attacks on the artillery and providing U.S. escort to the territorial waters. He stated that the JC had replied in a message quoted

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just above that the GRC should first demonstrate more determination. Quemoy, he noted, still had thirty days of supplies left. Dulles asked how helpful GRC counter-battery fire was. Twining replied that it would help keep Chinese Communist heads down but would not be too effective.

A Navy briefing was presented, which suggested that the GRC were not doing their best to supply the Islands and seemed to be trying to get the United States involved. It was Twining's view as well that this was their main motive. McElroy stated that if this were so, a way had to be found to get the GRC to act. U.S. direct involvement would lead to casualties and have serious repercussions, the Secretary of Defense said. Dulles and Robertson questioned whether the GRC was really engaged in a "pretty complicated plot" to get the United States involved.* Dulles stated that it was more likely that the GRC needed experience and training in supply operations under fire. If the GRC could handle resupply there would be more time for maneuver, Dulles said. Otherwise, there would be a real

* A State Department briefing paper had informed Dulles of the Joint Chiefs' view that the GRC were holding back on its resupply effort. The memorandum, prepared by Green and signed by Robertson, had taken the capability seriously and had concluded: "The primary problem seems to be to get the GRC Navy to act. This may require a firm and frank talk with the Generalissimo." 70

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crisis within two or three weeks. Dulles' comments were followed by a general discussion of the difficulty of convoy and the way in which it could be made more effective. McElroy suggested enlisting Drumright's support to get the GRC to make a greater effort. Sprague pointed out that the key was to convince the GRC that the United States would not do the supply job for them. Robertson suggested that, if Smoot confirmed the view that the GRC were dragging its feet, Drumright and Smoot should see Chiang on this. Dulles cautioned that they must be on sure ground before going to Chiang. In that hand U.S. information on the effort was lacking. The activity seemed more like blundering than willfulness. It was inconceivable, Dulles stated, that the people of Quemoy would be party to a deliberate plan to sabotage the unloading operations. Twining pointed out that the men on the boats, as on the shore, controlled the unloading. The LSM which had been damaged and failed to unload on the 11th could have unloaded one half of its cargo in the 40 minutes that it had. Twining stated that aerial resupply offered only limited possibilities. McElroy approved Dulles' suggestion that the United States station observers on boats and on the beaches. It was agreed that the JCS would immediately contact the GRC to inform them of the sense

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Military planners continued to consider possible ways of aiding resupply. In a memorandum prepared by the Joint Staff for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it was noted that CINCPAC had proposed that either the United States permit GRC bombing of the artillery or U.S. escort all the way in. The Joint Staff study noted that neither of these offered assurance of being useful and was not recommended. It claimed that the supply situation was not critical, although present methods of resupply would never be truly effective, due partly to GRC lack of experience and organization and partly to GRC lack of will or possibly to a deliberate effort to further involve the United States.⁷²

A memorandum prepared in the Office of Chief of Naval Operations provided the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department with a summary of the resupply situation and noted that continued lack of success of U.S. and GRC resupply was a matter of grave concern. It stated that the situation would become critical in two to three weeks if there was no resupply. An enclosure to the memorandum discussed in more detail the problems of resupply. It noted that the Chinese Communist Navy had posed no threat since the United States escorting had begun and that the failure of resupply was then due to:

- (a) Chinese Communist artillery fire on all beaches,
- (b) horrendous sea conditions at this time of year,
- (c) beach profiles which precluded dry-ramp unloading;
and
- (d) GRC deficiencies.

The memorandum continued that U.S. action to correct Chinese Nationalist deficiencies had not yet become effective but declared that when they did become effective it would require a major increase in the Chinese Communist effort to prevent resupply.⁷³

Washington was not prepared to accept the need for a greater American effort. In addition to the optimism reflected in the Navy memorandum just quoted, the daily report to the President on September 15 informed him that both CINCPAC and the TDC had not concluded that the resupply problem was insurmountable. Eisenhower was told that an all-out effort was being made to get the GRC to do the job.⁷⁴

A more pessimistic note, however, was sounded in an SNIE, which was published the same day. The estimate predicted that the most likely Chinese Communist course of action was a continuation of the interdiction by which they hoped to make the island untenable. The Communists were expected to be willing to take action involving considerable

risk of major conflict with the United States, and it was the unanimous view of the United States Intelligence Board that the Communists would probably fire on American ships going all the way in to Quemoy. They estimated that it was highly unlikely that the Chinese would call off the artillery fire or attempt a landing. A landing was seen as unlikely because it would involve action with the United States, diminish the Communist propaganda advantage, and was unnecessary since the Chinese believed that Quemoy would fall to interdiction. The estimate affirmed that the Communists would reject any negotiated settlement restoring the status quo ante or implying a "two-China" situation.

On the subject of Sino-Soviet relations, the estimate began with the premise that the Soviets were informed about and approved of Chinese actions. The Soviets were believed to be interested in discrediting the United States and increasing Communist China's prestige. The Intelligence Board expressed the belief that the Soviets would not intervene if the war were extended by conventional means to the mainland opposite Quemoy and that they might not intervene if tactical nuclear weapons were used in the vicinity of Taiwan. However, the estimate concluded in the observation that at some point the extension of nuclear

operations into China, the Soviets would probably directly attack American forces and their bases.^{75*}

On the afternoon of September 16, Eisenhower in Newport spoke to Dulles at the UN by phone on the Far East situation.⁷⁷ In the conversation Eisenhower proposed exploring the possibility of developing a program which might appeal to the GRC of making their forces more mobile by giving them some amphibious vessels and reconditioned destroyers. The President suggested that this might be less costly than keeping the reinforced Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Straits.⁷⁸ Dulles spent the day at the UN consulting with members of his staff as well as with British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd** and UN Secretary General Hammarskjold.⁷⁹ On the same afternoon, Acting Secretary of State Christian Herter phoned Rear Admiral Heyward, Director of the Political-Military Policy Division of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. Herter told Heyward that Dulles earlier in the day had asked for some

* I have no way of assessing what effect if any this estimate had. It was apparently prepared while most of the officials in the CIA Office of National Estimates who normally prepared estimates on China were away and did not express the considered view of these individuals.⁷⁶

** For a discussion of British pressure on Washington, see below, pp. 457-464.

thoughts on what alternative courses there might be to continuing in the present support of the CRC and occupation of the Offshore Islands.

In addition to asking for a response as quickly as possible to the question of what alternative courses there might be to the one the United States was currently pursuing, Herter requested the Pentagon's best judgment by 2:00 p.m. on two questions, both assuming that no cease-fire in the Taiwan Straits took place and that the resupply continued at the present unsatisfactory rate:

- (1) How long can the status quo be maintained before pressure by the CRC would be so great that we would have to take action beyond that now being taken, and
- (2) How long can supplies on the Island hold out?⁸⁰

As will be seen, the JCS answer to Herter's basic question of what alternatives there were was to be approved by the JCS and forwarded to the State Department by a letter from the Secretary of Defense on the 26th--10 days after Herter made his urgent request.* Herter did receive an answer to his second even more urgent question. In a briefing given by the Navy for Herter and other State

*It took 4 days for the Joint Chiefs to prepare an answer but 6 more for the State Department to prepare a letter.

Department officials it was also stated that the problem of Communist interdictory fire was insoluble on a long-term basis. The best estimate available in the Pentagon was that the overall logistic status in the Quemoy Islands was computed to be six or eight weeks at the present rate of consumption.⁸¹

On September 17, the first reassessment of the resupply situation, which was to lead finally to a more optimistic conclusion being accepted by all, was made in the office of the Chief of Naval Operations. The memorandum was in the nature of a revision of a document prepared on September 16 and cited just above. The original memorandum had been based on information from the field. The second memorandum was based on a careful evaluation of consumption rates during the period September 3 to September 13. The new memorandum essentially presented the case that both current supplies on the Islands and resupply rates had been underestimated by a value of a half. Table 24 indicates graphically the change that was made in the estimate of current supplies on Quemoy. The memorandum also reported that convoys since September 3 had delivered a total of 348 tons.^{82*}

*The optimistic picture reflected in the memorandum was reported by the Washington Post on September 20, 1954. The reporter, John F. Harris of the Washington Post, stated that U.S. military officials disagreed with the optimistic picture.

Table 24

NAVY ESTIMATES OF SUPPLIES AVAILABLE ON QUEMOY

ITEM	SEPT. 16 ESTIMATE	SEPT. 17 ESTIMATE
1. Rations	28 days	59 days
2. Equipment	45 days	95 days
3. Fuel	48 days	101 days
4. Ammunition	29 days	62 days

SOURCE: Navy Memorandum for the JCS, Subject: Resupply of the GRC Held Offshore Islands (U) OP-6016/WDW D60, September 17, 1958 (Top Secret).

Meeting in Herter's office on September 18, State Department officials had apparently not yet received or had not accepted the more optimistic Navy report on the resupply situation. The meeting had been called to draft a memorandum to be delivered to the Secretary of State in New York. The memorandum, which was approved and taken by Green to the United Nations, stated that the resupply situation was not bright and that it was not clear the new deliveries would break the blockade. It reported that Communist fire was very effective. The Islands might be able to hold out for several more months by reducing requirements to 300 tons by not firing back, and by increasing resupply to 100-200 tons per day. Sooner or later, the memorandum noted, the United States would have to take new action in the form of more extensive convoy, attacking shore batteries or granting permission to the GRC to attack shore batteries. The Communist artillery could not be knocked out by conventional fire and thus the only effective means would be to use atomic weapons--with grave

with Chiang Kai-shek on the futility of the Quemoy convoy runs. He stated that they knew it was possible to land enough supplies on a bombarded beach, to keep a sizeable force fighting for a long time. This could be done by training in amphibious techniques, by mixing up the landing procedures to keep the enemy guessing, and by determination. He wrote that the Pentagon thought there was no need to bomb until all possibilities for supplying Quemoy had been tested. 83
 U.S. convoy orders had been tested.

political costs. The memorandum suggested that the GRC might be willing to accept demilitarization within a few weeks but that the Communists might stall the negotiations long enough for the Islands to fall. Thus it was necessary to get an immediate ceasefire. The memorandum concluded by suggesting that the United States quietly accept a resolution calling for an end to provocative action and demilitarization of the Islands.^{84*}

On September 19 Dulles returned to Washington from New York⁸⁵ and on the next morning met at his home with Earter, Robinson, Twining, Burke, Sprague and Cabell. Dulles began the meeting by declaring that the situation was grave and that there were three possibilities for interpreting the Chinese Communist action:

- (1) They were preparing an open attack on the OSI, perhaps followed by an attack on Taiwan.
- (2) They were engaged in a Berlin-type blockade operation.
- (3) There would be a gradual tapering off as in 1954 and 1955.

He declared there was insufficient evidence to be confident of a trend toward (3). Burke declared that the

* It is not clear whether State Department officials envisioned putting pressure on the GRC to implement the resolution.

Chinese Communists might let up for a while to get out of caves and gun emplacements. Dulles emphasized that if the Chinese Communists let up, the United States should reciprocate. Twining agreed and, addressing the second possibility, questioned whether a Berlin-type blockade could be broken. Burke, reflecting the optimistic mood which was becoming prevalent within his office, declared that Quemoy had hidden supplies and stated that Quemoy could hold out for two months at the rate of 100 tons a day of resupply, but not indefinitely at that rate. However, he stated that a buildup of 300 tons a day was likely, and this could go on for a long period. The problem was morale since the troops could not be rotated. Dulles stated that the GRC seemed to have failed to appreciate that the United States had a serious problem with public opinion and had to keep its allies together. He asked whether there was any evidence of planned assault. He noted that the Chinese Communists probably realized that this would involve U.S. sea and air action against the shore batteries and assault craft, which would defeat the assault. Twining noted that the White House paper of September 6, initialed by the President, had given the Joint Chiefs of Staff standing authority to oppose assault by using conventional weapons.

against artillery positions and naval targets. Cabell reported that the CIA estimated that the Soviet Union would not become involved unless the war extended beyond the Straits area. He noted that the Soviets were not taking overt measures as they took in the Middle East crisis and were not making any unusual preparations.* Burke declared that the Khrushchev letter seemed to be saying that Soviet support would be only logistical unless the United States used atomic weapons, in which case they would retaliate in kind.

Dulles reported that Drumright's assessment of the situation was that it was satisfactory, provided that the United States was prepared to oppose an assault and could keep Quemoy resupplied on an austerity basis. However, the real question was whether the GRC would tolerate this situation, bearing in mind that the GRC might view this as a golden opportunity for recovering the mainland by bringing on a U.S.-Chinese Communist war. Dulles reported that this view was held by many people in Taiwan.

* This reflected the CIA's position more accurately than the SNIE. See above pp. 425 and especially the n. on p. 425.

General discussion followed on how to make the GRC aware of the possibility that Taiwan would be destroyed in such a war. Twining noted that a GRC air attack on the shore batteries would not knock them out, and even if retaliation were limited to Quemoy, the situation would be bad. Dulles summarized his opinion at the time by indicating that he felt this was essentially a Berlin-type blockade operation in which the United States must make a maximum supply effort while ready to act against Chinese Communist assaults and restraining the GRC. Burke indicated that the current resupply operations were costing the U.S. Navy three million dollars, and indicated that he proposed considering an all U.S. convoy.*

Dulles stated that the United States should ask the GRC to restrain itself. He noted on the basis of his recent visit to the United Nations that most UN members supported withdrawal and that, in a sense, they were right, but that there was unfortunately no way to withdraw from the Off-shore Islands without engendering the collapse of the GRC and the takeover of Taiwan by insurgents and possibly by

* Though this was not brought out at the meeting, it was the current view of the American Force as well as American Officials on Taiwan that an expansion of Chinese Nationalist was preferable to an increase in U.S. action. 85

attack from the mainland. Cabell noted that this was the CIA estimate as well.

If the issue were raised in the UN, Dulles noted, the United States would press for a resolution asking for a ceasefire, a renunciation of force, and an examination of measures to tranquilize the situation. The Chinese Communists might not accept such a resolution, but it might pass. At this point, Twining read a JCS paper opposing United Nations consideration of the issue. Dulles replied, however, that there was no way of preventing it. In addition, the United States had been committed by Eisenhower in 1955 to go to the United Nations. He noted that a resolution putting Taiwan under a UN trusteeship and admitting Communist China to the UN was the real feeling of 90 per cent of the members of the UN and that only U.S. pressure prevented it.^{87*}

* On September 21, Hanso Baldwin in an analysis of the situation in the New York Times reported that the GRC had revised its tonnage supply estimates for Quemoy from 900 to 400 to 500 tons a day, but that supply ships were still landing one day's supplies during the week and that Quemoy was living on its reserves. He reported that the LST's were succeeding in running the blockade by being loaded with 20 amphibious tanks which themselves were loaded with ammunition, food and supplies. In the same article, Baldwin reported that the howitzers recently sent to Taiwan had reached Quemoy safely. He pointed out that they could fire both nuclear and conventional ammunition but that the GRC has nuclear ammunition. He reported that the Chinese Communists could

On September 22, Dulles in an "off-the-record" talk to the senior officers course of the Foreign Service, noted that American policy had two justifications: American national interest in keeping the Pacific in friendly hands and the principle that open force should not be used for aggressive purposes. He declared that American policy had to be publicly defended on both grounds. Dulles also pointed out that legal considerations prevented the United States from saying unconditionally that it would defend Quemoy. He indicated, however, that the Chinese Communists had tied Taiwan to the Offshore Islands and "that goes pretty far to resolve the problem and make clear what we would do." He denied that the United States stood alone on this issue, noting for example, that "the Government of the United Kingdom is thoroughly sympathetic with our position."⁸⁸

During the latter part of September, the Joint Chiefs of Staff worked on an answer to Secretary Herter's request

continue the artillery blockade and still have a lot of ammunition.

The article was interpreted by some observers as being an attempt by some, whoever had leaked the information about the howitzers to Baldwin, to make an implicit nuclear threat to the Chinese Communists. But as was noted above, the desire to send the howitzers to Quemoy, which was supported by both the Navy and the State Department, was simply very substantial. By National conventional strength.

as to what possible alternatives there were to the current course of action in the Taiwan Straits. By the time the Chiefs could produce an answer which could then be forwarded through ISA and approved by the Secretary of Defense, the supply situation might be drastically improved and the Chief's recommendation that the current policy should be pursued would be accepted by all. On September 20 they met to approve a draft proposal. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force came to the meeting with a brief from his staff, noting that the Eisenhower speech of September 11 had defined U.S. determination to support the Offshore Islands and stating that the real issue was the position of the Free World in the Far East. A memorandum which he presented to the Joint Chiefs prior to the meeting suggested that the United States prepare a Joint U.S.-GRC ultimatum threatening GRC bombing and U.S. escort and/or bombing and a U.S. show of air strength. The memorandum stressed, however, that a limited release of the GRC was preferable to active U.S. participation.⁸⁹

On September 20, the Joint Chiefs approved a memorandum which they proposed be sent to the Secretary of State reaffirming the desirability of continuing the U.S.-GRC supply system. The memorandum noted that as the GRC became

more adept, an increasing amount of supplies could be delivered. It declared that any modification would involve increasing U.S. participation. This latter alternative could not be implemented with any degree of assurance, and the extent of U.S. involvement would necessarily depend on Chinese Communist reaction. It noted that the Radford/Robertson/Chiang conversation of 1955, which produced an agreement to blockade the coast of China in the event of hostilities, was no longer applicable since the completion of the railroad to Amoy had removed Chinese Communist dependence on seaborne supplies.⁹⁰

Following normal Department of Defense channels, the JCS memorandum was sent to the Office of International Security Affairs, which received the memorandum and produced a draft cover letter on September 22.^{91*}

*It should be noted that the role which ISA played at this time was far different from the one it plays in the current Administration. During this crisis ISA's function seems to have been confined to military assistance, with the Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, Irwin, present at meetings and participating only in discussion of items related to supplies to the GRC under the military assistance program and not concerned with the broader political and military aspects of the problem. The focus for these at the time in the Pentagon was the Navy Office of Political-Military Affairs and more generally the Office of the Chief of Operations.

The final version of the letter was not produced until September 26, when ISA forwarded to the Secretary of State the JCS memorandum quoted above with a cover letter endorsing its conclusions.⁹²

Before Dulles left for New York on September 25, he met with Herter, Robertson, Macomber and Allen Dulles⁹³ and was presented with a new estimate of the resupply situation made in the Navy and the State Department. The results were contained in a memorandum signed by Robertson. In it the Secretary was advised that the Joint Chiefs of Staff now believed that they could keep Quemoy going indefinitely and that the only problem might be morale, though at the present time it was very high. Neither the Chinese Communists nor the GRC were likely to expand the military operations.⁹⁴

Early in the day of September 25, Drumright had been told that Washington did not believe that the resupply situation was sufficiently critical to justify bombing the mainland as proposed by the Nationalists. Drumright was told that the JCS believed that resupply could be further improved and if the GRC expanded operations in any way, this would have a bad effect on U.S. and world opinion.⁹⁵

On September 25 Felt reported personally to Burke that the situation would require a critical decision within thirty days.⁹⁶ On the next day, in a personal message to Felt, Burke stated that the political situation in Washington might become critical in a few days. He noted that it was not just the long-term supply situation that was important, and declared that a demonstration of the ability to resupply the Islands might determine whether the United States would stay in the Far East. Equally important, Burke wrote, was an immediate dispatch stating that Felt could resupply, provided of course that he could live up to it.⁹⁷

On the 27th, in another conversation with Secretary General Hammarskjold in New York, Dulles acknowledged the possible value of an intermediary, and the possibility of Hammarskjold assuming this role was discussed.⁹⁸ Right after the meeting, Dulles left New York and spent the remainder of the day in Boston, among other things addressing the Research Associates and Fellows of the Harvard Center for International Affairs.⁹⁹ Several days later, in a letter to Dulles, the Secretary General indicated that he was reluctant to assume the role of intermediary unless it

... have some greater chance of success than then

On September 28 Dulles, back in Washington, conferred with Herter and Robertson, who met him at the airport. Later in the day, he talked with Allen Dulles alone for fifteen minutes and then for two hours with Herter, Robertson, Marshall Green, and others from State. He spent the next day in frequent consultation on the situation and saw the President at 11:00 a.m.^{101*}

The National Security Council met on October 2 and Dulles also conferred privately at the White House with both the President and Deputy Secretary of Defense Quarles.* Soon after the White House sessions, Dulles left on another vacation from which he was not to return until October 7.¹⁰²

By very early October, the entire decision-making community in Washington was convinced that the supply problem had been solved. The official SITREP of September 30 informed the White House that Quemoy now had more than thirty days' supply of all classes.¹⁰³ U.S. officials believed that the action of the next two or three weeks would demonstrate that the Chinese Communists could not

*No information on the substance of these conversations is available.

*No information is available on what was discussed.

take Quemoy by interdiction. They felt the Chinese Communists would then have to bomb Quemoy or accept a de facto truce and would probably do the latter. The fact that the Chinese Communists had not used all their capability, notably air power, or attempted amphibious assault, indicated to Washington officials that the Communists were hesitant to take any action which would involve the United States. The United States would probably be drawn in if the Communists used bombs because the Chinese Nationalists would then attack Chinese Communist airfields on the mainland and the Chinese Communists in turn would retaliate against Taiwan airfields. U.S. officials recognized that the Chinese Communists might step up their operations. However, the contingency plans in the event of invasion had been made and there was little that could be done but press ahead with the resupply and watch for a change in Chinese Communist strategy.

WARSAW TALKS

Word reached Washington on September 6 of the Chou En-lai statement offering to reopen the Sino-American ambassadorial talks. Since the United States had been pressing for some time for a reopening of the talks, it was announced at a White House meeting held on

September 6 that the offer should be accepted.* It was also stipulated that the GRC should be advised that the United States would not permit anything prejudicing GRC rights and that the GRC would be informed in advance of proposed U.S. positions at the talks. Dulles and Eisenhower were apparently hopeful that the Chinese Communists, faced with a demonstration of U.S.-GRC determination to defend the Off-shore Islands, were then seeking to disengage, but they recognized that the Chou statement might be only a tactical move which could be followed by an invasion attempt.¹⁰⁴

After the meeting a statement was issued expressing American willingness to resume the talks.¹⁰⁵

It will be recalled that prior to the crisis (on June 30), the Chinese Communists issued a public ultimatum stating that if the U.S.-Chinese Communist talks were not resumed within thirty days the Chinese Communists would consider them broken off. After waiting more than thirty days, the United States had indicated that it was prepared to reopen the talks at the ambassadorial level as demanded by the Chinese Communists and suggested that they be reopened in Warsaw between U.S. Ambassador James Beam and Chinese Communist Ambassador Wang.

* For discussion of the other decisions taken at the GRC, see pp. 285-293.

On September 8 the U.S. letter of July 28 which offered to reopen the talks at the ambassadorial level was, as was indicated in the American statement, still unanswered. Beam was instructed to send a letter to Wang calling attention to the public statements of the United States on September 6 that it was ready to reopen the Warsaw talks and stating that the "U.S. Ambassador to Warsaw stands ready promptly to meet with the Chinese Communist Ambassador there who has previously acted in this matter."¹⁰⁶ Later in the day Beam was sent a telegram giving him the proposed U.S. agenda for the meeting which included: (a) preservation of peace and avoidance of provocative action in the Taiwan Straits, and (b) release of the remaining U.S. prisoners held by the Chinese Communists.¹⁰⁷ The American Embassy in Taipei was sent a draft of the instructions which the Department was then preparing to be sent to Beam for the first meeting, providing in greater detail what Beam should discuss under the two proposed agenda items and including a proposal for a ceasefire. Drumright was authorized to show these to the Nationalists and to indicate to them that they were being shown the instructions for communication before they were sent to Beijing.^{108*}

Drumright had noted that September 11 news reports from the United States indicated that a ceasefire

Prior to the arrival of the telegram, Chiang Kai-shek in a luncheon meeting with General LeMay and U.S. Ambassador Drumright had opposed the reopening of the Warsaw talks but stated that he had understood the U.S. position and the U.S. need to reopen the talks.¹¹⁰

On September 8 a statement by Mao to the meeting of the Supreme State Conference the previous week was broadcast by the Peking Radio which expressed approval of the reopening of the Warsaw talks and stated that he was "hopeful" of results from the talks.¹¹¹

On September 10 Drumright cabled from Taipei that the GRC would reluctantly accept a ceasefire but that it would not accept a formal ceasefire agreement. He reported that the "GRC views resumption of discussions with greatest... apprehension and dismay."¹¹²

The telegram was in response to the position which the United States had proposed to take at Warsaw. The U.S. position when presented at the Sino-American talks did not call for a formal ceasefire agreement.¹¹³

On September 11 the press reported that Chinese Communist Ambassador Wang had left Communist China

of the talks with the Chinese Communists and stated that if this were true, he hoped that the United States would consult fully with the GRC. This was another instance in which Drumright was to give his first information about events in Washington through a press report rather than through official channels.

for Warsaw the day before.¹¹⁴ The Chinese Communist Foreign Minister, in the context of making the fourth formal protest in five days on "violation" of Chinese Communist territorial waters by U.S. forces, noted that he expected the talks in Warsaw to resume soon.¹¹⁵ On September 12 Wang arrived in Warsaw, after stopping in Moscow on the way from Peking, and announced that he was "anxious" to negotiate a settlement.¹¹⁶ It was thus some six days after the Chinese Communists had proposed reopening the Warsaw talks that Wang arrived in Warsaw to begin preliminary contacts with Beam, looking toward the reopening of the talks.

On the 12th Beam received his instructions for the first meeting, which had been cleared with the Chinese Nationalists. At this time Dulles expected the Chinese Communists to open the meeting by insisting on recognition of the twelve-mile limit and on U.S. withdrawal from Taiwan. He felt that after Beam had rejected these proposals, serious negotiations might then begin, but he was not very hopeful that this would happen.¹¹⁷ The message to the American representative instructed him to stress the responsibility that rested on both sides to secure an immediate cessation of hostilities. The first order of business, Beam was to propose, should be this cessation of hostilities.

If this were secured, it would then be possible to turn to a discussion of the renunciation of the use of force in the Taiwan Straits, which had been the principal U.S. theme in previous U.S.-Chinese Communist meetings. The telegram emphasized that it was important that the United States show a constructive approach for propaganda reasons and that it was necessary to defend the GRC on the record.¹¹⁸

This telegram and a future one providing Beam with his instructions as to what he should say at the meeting were carefully worked over and personally approved by Dulles as were the instructions to subsequent meetings.¹¹⁹ They were clearly written with the expectation that there was at least some chance that the proceedings of the meetings would be published by one side or the other at some point. Although this expectation proved to be incorrect, at least to this date of writing, substantial leaks of what took place at the meetings occurred both in the American and in the Chinese Communist press.

On September 12 the press reported that the GRC had always been against negotiations, and on the 13th Drumright cabled that the GRC objected to the Warsaw talks and urged the United States to demand that the Chinese Communists "cease any further hostile action in the Taiwan Straits."¹²⁰

On the 13th Warsaw was reported to be gloomy over the prospects of the talks, and diplomats there were said to blame the United States in advance for their expected failure.¹²¹

By September 14, as has been indicated, the United States Government was becoming increasingly concerned with the situation in the Taiwan Straits and State Department officials believed that unless something could be done to break the blockade, either by military action or a ceasefire, the United States would be forced to move in a different direction. The State Department, in a cable drafted by Dulles and Robertson,¹²² therefore urged Beam, "in view of the urgency of obtaining a ceasefire," to press for a meeting as soon as possible.¹²³ On September 14th the United States and Communist China issued a joint statement in Warsaw announcing that they had agreed to meet in the Polish capital.¹²⁴

In discussing the Warsaw talks the Moscow press was reported by an American correspondent to be playing up two issues: that difference between the United States and Communist China should be negotiated, and that a territorial dispute between Communist China and the Chinese Nationalists was not a concern of the United States.¹²⁵ As

will be seen, this was precisely the line taken by the Chinese Communists at Warsaw, suggesting that the Russians were at least informed in advance of the Chinese Communist position.

On September 15 the first session of the Warsaw talks was held. The first session began with Beam asking Wang if he had anything to say. When Wang replied that he did not,¹²⁶ Beam stressed the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities and proceeded along the lines of the instructions discussed above. Wang proposed a draft of a communiqué which would announce that the United States and the People's Republic of China had agreed to settle their disputes peacefully and that they had also agreed that Taiwan, the Penghus, and the Offshore Islands were Chinese. The United States would therefore announce the withdrawal of its military forces from Taiwan, the Penghus, and the Offshore Islands. The Chinese Communists, in turn, would proclaim that if the Chinese Nationalists withdrew from the Offshore Islands, the Chinese Communists would not pursue them. Further, the Chinese Communists would state that they would strive "in a certain period of time" to liberate Taiwan peacefully.¹²⁷ Thus Wang introduced the policy of distinguishing Taiwan from the Offshore Islands, which he later to abandon.

Wang declared that the possibility of a U.S.-Chinese Communist ceasefire did not exist. The United States rather should persuade the Chinese Nationalists to withdraw from the Offshore Islands.¹²⁸ It was announced after the meeting that further talks had been put off for two days to allow consultations with governments and that the discussions would remain secret.¹²⁹

As he was to continue to do for the following sessions of the talks, Beam followed up his telegram, reporting what had taken place with an evaluation of the session. Beam stated that Wang had made no concessions: that he had held Taiwan and the Offshore Islands to be Chinese and therefore that the Communists had every right to liberate them by whatever means they chose without foreign interference.¹³⁰

There was nothing then in what had occurred at the first meeting to suggest any possibility for fruitful negotiation, and this was the pattern that was to continue.

On September 18 the People's Daily provided lengthy comments for its readers on the Warsaw talks. Observing the U.S.-Chinese Communist agreement to keep the talks private, the Communists resorted to the device of quoting American, Japanese and London newspaper and unidentified

sources on what had taken place.* According to the report in the People's Daily, the United States had demanded a ceasefire and stated that this was a pre-condition of the settlement of the Taiwan Straits problem. The paper declared that the United States was trying to confuse the internal issue of liberating Taiwan from Chiang Kai-shek with the international dispute between the United States and the People's Republic of China and thereby induce permanent recognition of the U.S. occupation of Taiwan. It declared that there was no problem of a ceasefire and that the present firing was simply a continuation of the civil war. It declared that the United States sought a ceasefire so that Chiang Kai-shek could resupply Quemoy. The article ended by noting that if both sides were sincere, the talks might have some results.¹³¹

Instructions for the second meeting of the talks were approved personally by Dulles¹³² and sent to Beam on October 16. Beam was told to reject the Wang draft introduced at the first meeting as unacceptable since it might

* As might be expected, the Chinese Communists were careful to quote accurate leaks on what had taken place, or at least leaks which served their interest, which turned out in this case to be virtually synonymous.

imply that if the artillery bombardment ceased, U.S. forces in the area would be substantially reduced. He was also told to stress that once the ceasefire question were settled, the possibility of avoiding provocative actions by the parties involved could be discussed. The important thing, Beam was told to indicate, was a ceasefire and not a formal announcement of it.¹³³ Nevertheless he was instructed to present the following proposed communiqué:

In order to bring an end to hostilities now occurring on and about the Quemoy Islands and the Matsu Islands, and thus to help to safeguard peace in the Far East and the world, Ambassador Jacob D. Beam, on behalf of the Government of the United States of America and Ambassador Wang Ping-nan, on behalf of the Government of the People's Republic of China, without prejudice to the peaceful pursuit by each side of its policies, agree to announce that:

(1) Ambassador Wang Ping-nan informs Ambassador Jacob D. Beam that the Government of the People's Republic of China renounces the use of force against the Quemoy Islands and the Matsu Islands, except in individual and collective self-defense and on the basis of reciprocity, will assure that the adjacent mainland and other coastal areas will not be used for attacks or other provocative actions directed against the main coastal Islands. (2)

Ambassador Jacob D. Beam informs Amb. Wang Ping-nan:

(a) The U.S. renounces the use of force in the area of the Quemoy Islands and the Matsu Islands except in individual and collective self-defense: (b) the U.S. will seek that the Quemoy Islands and the Matsu Islands will not be used for attacks or other provocative actions directed against the mainland or other coastal islands. (3) The two Ambassadors should continue their efforts to seek practical and feasible means for a base reduction of forces and armaments in those coastal Islands adjoining areas.¹³⁴

The GRC had been informed in advance of the communiqué which Beam presented on the 18th and had objected to it in its entirety and particularly to paragraph 2(b) relating to the U.S. effort to restrain actions from Quemoy and Matsu which might be provocative. The GRC requested that the communiqué not be presented.¹³⁵ After it had been made clear to the GRC that the United States was going ahead with proposing its communiqué, the GRC informed Drumright of its belief that the United States should not meet in Warsaw at all until after a ceasefire. Drumright was told that the GRC would be forced to renounce publicly any U.S.-Chinese Communist agreement to prevent further offensive action from the Offshore Islands.¹³⁶

There was no progress at the September 18 meeting. Wang repeated the Chinese Communist position and did not probe for more details of the American proposals for a ceasefire.¹³⁷

At the next meeting on September 22, Beam, acting on instructions again worked on personally by Dulles,¹³⁸ stated that in the American view an attack on the Offshore Islands was not a domestic matter which concerned only the Chinese Government, and he stressed the need for a ceasefire.¹³⁹ This time Washington officials had been convinced that

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there would be no agreements reached at Warsaw. They felt however, that the United States had to participate in the talks because of allied pressure and they believed that Peking was unlikely to step up its military operations while the talks were in progress.¹⁴⁰ Wang presented a new draft, again calling for a peaceful settlement and a U.S. withdrawal from Taiwan and the Taiwan Straits. Wang charged that the United States was planning to occupy Quemoy and then attack the mainland. He declared that the first step must be a U.S. withdrawal from Taiwan.^{141*}

The next meeting of the Warsaw talks was held on September 25. Beam again stressed the need for a ceasefire, indicating that otherwise the conflict might spread. He also raised the possibility of a phased withdrawal after the ceasefire.¹⁴³ Wang simply repeated his previous statements. Beam's evaluation was that the Chinese appeared to be marking time and simply reporting U.S. proposals back to Peking, but not in any way probing the U.S. positions.¹⁴⁴

* A press report on the meeting of the 22d indicated that the meeting had reached no decision on a ceasefire. It declared that both Beam and Wang were getting statements and moves from their governments and were not being given any latitude to negotiate. It was felt in Washington that the Chinese Communists believed that the United States was under pressure from its allies to reach an agreement with the Chinese were reported to have accused the United States of trying to sabotage the talks.¹⁴²

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The next meeting was held on September 30.* Beam was instructed to attack the Chinese Communist record of aggression and to introduce a revised proposal, the purpose of which was to express the fact that the current dispute was international.¹⁴⁵ The new proposal which Beam introduced suggested a communiqué in which the U.S. Ambassador, noting the People's Republic of China's claim to Taiwan, the Penghus, Quemoy and Matsu, and the Soviet support for these claims, would dispute these claims and assert that there was thus an international disagreement and a threat of force that endangered international peace and security and which ought to be resolved by renunciation of force in such a manner that international peace, security, and justice were not in danger. Both Governments, whose representatives were meeting in Warsaw, would pledge to seek a peaceful solution and in the meantime to reciprocally refrain from hostility.¹⁴⁶

At the meeting of the 30th Wang declared that the UN Charter supported the Chinese Communist position and stated that the U.S., by making available Sidewinders and other weapons to the Chinese Nationalists, had created a very serious situation. Beam reported that the meeting had produced the sharpest exchanges thus far in the series of

* The time interval between the two meetings was always short. The first meeting was held by Beam and Wang without any debate.

meetings and that the Chinese Communists particularly objected to the use of the Sidewinder missiles. He reported that the Chinese Communists seemed to be preparing for a long series of talks and that the Sidewinder issue was the only new point they had raised.¹⁴⁷

On October 1, Beam sent a telegram evaluating the first four Warsaw talks between himself and Chinese Communist Ambassador Wang. He concluded that they were producing no real progress. Chinese Communist rigidity plus indications that they expected long talks suggested to Beam that the Communists felt that continuing military pressure would bring them political gains. The reaction to the Sidewinder missile seemed to reveal a real concern with GRC modernization. He felt that this might increase Chinese Communist bargaining power with the Soviets for weapons.¹⁴⁸

At the next meeting of the Warsaw talks on October 4, Wang continued to refuse to be drawn into a discussion of the U.S. draft which had been presented at the previous meeting and there was a harsh exchange between Beam and Wang. The Chinese Communists charged that the United States was seeking a two-China policy, and Wang said, "You have introduced more atomic weapons and guided missile units to the Taiwan area." In commenting on the meeting, Beam noted that Wang seemed to be sensitive to the mention of possible Soviet

The meeting of October 4 was the last to be held before the Chinese Communist ceasefire in the Taiwan Straits on October 6. It seems clear now that the Chinese Communists were not interested in any kind of negotiation at Warsaw. They had refused to take up any of the U.S. suggestions to discuss what particular Chinese Nationalist actions provoked them, nor were they willing to discuss the demilitarization of the Offshore Islands, even though it clearly might have led to the capture of the Islands by the Chinese Communists. The talks seemed rather to have been simply a device for giving the Chinese Communists a color of reasonableness which would both deter the United States from over-reacting by bombing the mainland, and cause it to put pressure on the Chinese Nationalists not to bomb the mainland while the artillery fire continued. At the same time, the Communists succeeded, simply by holding the talks, in exacerbating U.S.-GRC relations. The suggestion that the Offshore Islands be separated from Taiwan does not appear to have been made by Wang at the first meeting in order to lay the basis for negotiations. The Chinese did not repeat this suggestion and did not ask for an American reaction to it. Peking had no reason to believe that Washington would pull U.S. forces out of Taiwan in return for a Chinese promise to use force to seize Taiwan.

For the United States, the holding of the talks once the Chinese had publicly proposed them was a political necessity. The Administration, faced with opposition from its allies, neutrals and from domestic public opinion, needed to do everything to make it appear that it desired peace. Dulles felt that Chou's proposal to reopen the talks might well be a sign of the Chinese desire to disengage and that the possibility of an agreement could not be entirely ruled out. In addition, the Secretary of State believed that the Chinese Communists had begun the crisis because they were provoked and therefore Beam was continually urged to draw the Chinese Communists into a discussion of what had provoked them so that the United States could eliminate this provocation and thus end the crisis. At the same time, Dulles, as well as his subordinates, was aware of the detrimental effect on U.S.-GRC relations which the talks produced. There was little hope in Washington that an agreement would be reached at Warsaw.

BRITISH PRESSURE ON WASHINGTON

Throughout the crisis the British Government made clear its opposition to American policy. American officials met frequently with British officials in an effort to explain and justify the American positions.

On August 30 Acting Secretary Christian Herter met with the British Minister in Washington, Viscount Hood, at the British Embassy to discuss the situation.* Herter reported to Hood that there was no Chinese Communist build-up of land or sea forces and that the attempt seemed to be to wear out the defenses by interdiction. Hood asked if the United States had decided on a course of action in the event of a major assault on the Islands. Herter in effect evaded answering the question by stating that the matter was one for Presidential decision and added that the interdiction campaign might not be successful. He noted also that it was not clear whether the Chinese Communists were interested in real estate or simply wanted to create pressure for a UN Security Council seat or other political objectives. He stressed that the United States was avoiding additional commitments to the CRC.¹⁵¹

On the way back from Newport, Dulles dictated a letter to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan which accurately

* On August 29 the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom reported that most British opinion, including the Conservative Government, would oppose the U.S. use of even conventional force to defend Quemoy and Matsu. Macmillan, he predicted, would probably condemn the use of force by the Chinese Communists and urge consideration. Public reaction would be much more adverse if nuclear weapons were used. However, there was support for the defense of Quemoy.¹⁵⁰

summarized his view of the situation at this time and in which he tried to explain the reasoning behind his Newport statement. Dulles noted that it was regrettable that so much seemed to hang on these small islands which were not readily defensible. He argued that the United States had made a serious effort to get the GRC off the islands but that it had never pushed this to the point of coercion because keeping Taiwan in friendly hands was not separable from the GRC holding the Islands. He noted that CIA, State, and the JCS were unanimous in their belief that the loss of the Offshore Islands by subversion or assault would have a serious impact on the Government of the Republic of China and on the U.S. position in the Far East. In this light, he reported to Macmillan that Eisenhower had authorized statements which did not make any formal commitment but which did indicate that Eisenhower would probably act if there were an effort to take Quemoy and Matsu which the GRC could not successfully resist. However, the GRC capability was not negligible. The Chinese Communists had so far avoided aerial attacks, perhaps in the fear of bringing in the United States.

If the United States were to defend the Offshore

the Chinese Communists wrote to Macmillan, the possibility of at least

small air-burst atomic weapons without fallout would likely be necessary. The entire military establishment assumed more and more that nuclear weapons would be used in the event of hostilities. If this were not the case, the U.S. would face a grave situation in view of the massive military manpower of the Sino-Soviet bloc. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were concerned about the United States being spread too thin and the lack of world understanding of the U.S. position. Dulles concluded by expressing his belief that a balanced, firm decision would deter Chinese Communist action, but he noted that Khrushchev and Mao might be reckless and so miscalculate. Therefore the U.S. position did involve serious risks, though acting strongly involved less risk than inaction. 152

British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan responded quickly to the letter in which Dulles had remarked that the U.S. had to defend Quemoy and Matsu even though it might lead to a world war. Macmillan warned that the new Commonwealth nations would be against any action, and that the others were hardly more enthusiastic. He also quoted a statement by Winston Churchill, made originally in a private letter to Eisenhower during the previous Taiwan Islands crisis in 1955, that "war keep coastal lands would not

be defensible here." Macmillan remarked that it reflected public opinion in Great Britain then as well as it had in 1955. A small war was not likely to continue long and the use of nuclear weapons seemed possible. Macmillan asked whether the UN General Assembly or the Security Council could do anything. Picking up a suggestion that Dulles has made to United Kingdom Ambassador Hood that demilitarization would make a good public position, he asked whether the United States shouldn't raise this issue publicly since it might rally public support. Alternatively, Macmillan suggested, it might be presented publicly or privately to the Soviet Union, which might be anxious about the situation. Macmillan concluded by asking Dulles whether he believed the Soviet Union and Communist China had agreed on war.^{153*}

Following the White House meeting on September 6 when the decision on how to defend Quemoy was taken,^{**} Eisenhower replied to Macmillan's letter. It was difficult, he said, for those not in direct contact to appreciate Chiang's temperament and commented that Chiang gave the impression

*The letter is summarized by Eisenhower in Waging Peace, p. 300.

** See pp. 285-293.

that coercion would end his capacity to retain Taiwan in friendly hands. This stood in the way of what many considered a reasonable solution. Eisenhower said that he hoped the Chou statement would mean the end of the crisis.¹⁵⁴ Dulles met with British Ambassador Lord Hood apparently to transmit the letter and to discuss the crisis.¹⁵⁵

On September 11 British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd in a letter to John Foster Dulles said that the Western line of defense, including Taiwan, was weakened by the GRC retention of Quemoy and Matsu. He cautioned that if the defense of them involved even the use of tactical nuclear weapons, the risk of a chain reaction was obvious. The letter asserted that GRC withdrawal would strengthen the GRC position and might be the only way to avoid defeat. With reference to the possibility of a demilitarization of the Offshore Islands, which was currently being considered by the American Government, Lloyd greatly doubted that the Chinese Communists would accept such a proposal even if the GRC did. He alluded to the importance of the Warsaw talks and suggested the value of talks at a higher level. In concluding, Lloyd indicated that the United Kingdom was opposed to the American policy of defending the Offshore Islands (if in fact that American policy since this had

never been formally made clear to the British), but said that the United Kingdom was willing to make a trial balloon of any idea if the United States thought it would help and concluded finally by asking how the United Kingdom could help.¹⁵⁶

On the next day, Dulles met with the British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Harold Caccia, to explain the American position in greater detail. He attempted to link the Chinese Communist move with the worldwide Communist offensive by noting that the Soviets were trying to give the impression that they were militarily dominant and that their military threat had caused the Western powers to back down at Suez, in the Turkish-Syrian clash, and in the recent Lebanon-Iraq crisis. The Secretary of State argued, apparently without any success, that if the United States seemed to be backing down, the whole Western defense structure in the Far East might collapse.¹⁵⁷

On September 26 Dulles met with Lloyd at the UN and took the line that the blockade could be broken. Lloyd reported to Dulles on information obtained from the Indian Ambassador to Peking, from the Indian Ambassador to the United Nations, Krishna Menon, and from Lloyd's conversations

The Indian Ambassador reported that the

Chinese Communists would not stop their actions if the U.S. military build-up in the area continued and that they would insist on withdrawal from the Offshore Islands but not Taiwan. Menon had reported that he was certain the Chinese Communists would not push for Taiwan at that time. Gromyko, according to Lloyd, first demanded withdrawal from the Offshore Islands and then asked if the United States might be willing to separate the Offshore Island issue from the issue of Taiwan.¹⁵⁸

While Washington acted to keep London informed and took British opposition as a sign of widespread dissent from American policy, the British position did not, as should be clear, have any specific direct effect on U.S. policy.